

[Executive Daily Update: Initiatives to deal with Coronavirus \(5 May 2020\)](#)

Northern Ireland Executive ministers and their officials have over the past 24 hours been involved in a number of initiatives and critical decisions relating to the Coronavirus emergency.

[Mallon announces automatic one year MOT exemption](#)

Infrastructure Minister Nichola Mallon has announced that a one year MOT temporary exemption certificate (TEC) will be processed automatically from Monday 11 May.

[Dodds announces £40 million secured for microbusiness Hardship Fund](#)

Economy Minister Diane Dodds has announced that £40 million is to be made available for a new Hardship Fund aimed at microbusinesses which have not been able to avail of the existing support schemes and which require financial support due to the impact of COVID-19.

[Air quality improvements must not be lost across Dundee](#)



I have called on Dundee City Council to ensure the significant improvements in air quality that have taken place during the COVID-19 lockdown and sharp reduction as vehicle usage is not lost when normality hopefully returns in the coming months.

As residents know, I have long campaigned on air quality issues, particularly in relation to Lochee Road where, as recently as January 2020, I again highlighted my concern that, yet again, leading air quality campaigners Friends of the Earth had highlighted air quality concerns in Lochee Road in its Scotland's most polluted streets survey, with Seagate in the city also highlighted in the January national air quality survey.

The current health emergency is a very challenging time for everyone and will continue to be so for some time. However, the air quality levels across Dundee with far less vehicle usage currently taking place has significantly improved. All air quality monitoring sites show particulates and nitrogen dioxide levels are down to low. Mean levels of nitrogen dioxide have reduced by some 68% in recent weeks on Lochee Road and nitric oxide by 55%. Many constituents have commented on the welcome and obvious air quality improvement and that's not just at the streets that have a known air quality concern normally.

Last week, the Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air published research showing many likely long-term health benefits from the pollution reductions in the UK and elsewhere in Europe, including fewer children developing asthma, fewer preterm births and fewer deaths long-term from better air. You can read the research at <https://energyandcleanair.org/air-pollution-deaths-avoided-in-europe-as-coal-oil-plummet/>

Of course vehicle traffic will increase as we hopefully get through the current COVID-19 health emergency and business, work and leisure traffic increases again, but I am adamant that the improvements in air quality must be maintained, particularly at the long-established areas of air quality concern in the city, including parts of Lochee Road in the West End.

I have written to senior council officers asking for detail of the particulates and nitrogen dioxide levels that have been monitored over the past six weeks and asked them to consider what steps are necessary to maintain the air quality improvements, particularly at what are normally the air quality hotspots in Dundee.

It is a very challenging time due to the COVID-19 emergency. However, there is the possibility of one positive outcome from this challenging period as we hopefully come out of the emergency in the months ahead – cleaner air – and the council must act to ensure that cleaner air is a long-term benefit to everyone in the city.

Dodds calls for more national support for local higher education sector

Economy Minister Diane Dodds has outlined the need for more national support for the local higher education sector as a result of COVID-19.